



Journal on
Music, Dance,
Fine Arts

Phoenix

JULY 1998

Rs. 10



Published by THE HANGAR PRESS



THE BANGALORE PRESS

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PHOENIX

Vol.3

No.4

JULY 1998

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Printed and published by
H.R. Ananth
for THE BANGALORE PRESS
No. 88, Mysore Road
Bangalore 560 018

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Cover Photo by
Mr. Sai Venkatesh

From the Editor



"This 'Picture and That' is a familiar heading which has almost become a cliché in news desks. The phrase has come in handy not merely when a heading has something to do with a picture illustration, but is used in many other analogous contexts.

But in the present context, the phrase fits in like a 'Tee. There it describes the metamorphosis that made all the difference to the cover design of the June issue of Phoenix.

It pertains to the photograph of Gayamucharya Gurnao Deshpande which adorned the said cover page.

As is well-known, the revered Hindustani vocalist passed away in the early eighties. That was when colour photography was yet in its nascent stage, the black and white variation still ruling the roost. Moreover, the veteran adhered the idea of posing for a photograph. It took considerable persuasion for some of his disciples to make him pose for one. And that he did reluctantly. The result is the portrait on the cover.

And that photograph naturally was in black and white. But our Managing Director would not compromise on that point. He was determined to have a colour picture for the cover. Under no circumstances can it be a black and white" he uttered. It was an impasse.

No doubt the Press is up to date in equipment. A change over from colour to Black and White was nothing unusual in its day-to-day discharge of orders. The converse in the "Photo shop" should be as simple too. However, the word for such a proposition had not arisen. This then was a challenge and was taken up with all earnestness.

It was a laborious process, though for the onlooker it is fascinating. But the press, patiently went through the process till they were satisfied with the colouration. Persistence yielded the desired results and the journal didn't have to break its tradition, one proudly had down by Sundaraj, its founder.

With such dedicated persons at the helm of affairs, the journal is sure to make headway and win the esteem of its readers and patrons. While the readership is steadily growing, the same, alas, cannot be said in the matter of sponsorship and advertising. And it is in these aspects that we at Phoenix are still keeping our fingers crossed!

Bharathanatya's bow in Belgaum

Much ink has flown in describing how the Indian classical arts of music and dance have won followers and admirers all over the globe. Bharathanatyam, especially has almost become a fashion with people of Europe and American, verily a symbol of cultural awareness in the civilised world today.

Yet it may appear strange, nay unbelievable that this ancient art form is little known in Belgaum, one of the major cities of our State. Though that is the place which gave birth to 'Kirana Gharana' one of the variations in Hindustani style of music, neither its counterpart the Carnatic music nor its sister art Bharathanatyam seem familiar in that part of our country.

It is in this perspective that the fledgling dance school, Shantala Natyalaya gains significance. The school run by young Rekha Hegde, a student of Narmada in Bharathanatyam and Maya Rao in Choreography (both of Bangalore) hit headlines recently by organising its first Ranga Pravesha by an alumnus to be followed by the school's first dance-drama.

The overwhelming way innumerable responded and booked the two programmes on consecutive days evoked not only for the need for such cultural activity in the entertainment starved city, but also bright future for the dance art there. But it can't go on if the dancers have to depend on outside musical support every time, as it would

be too expensive and may even scare away enthusiastic parents and their talented wards. In addition to imparting lessons in dance, the school under the circumstances will have to apply itself to this aspect too.

Siri Guttigali, the debutante certainly showed promise, her Nrithi revealing a sound sense of laya. Her Angikas also adhered to the demands of 'anga shuddham', though they could do with some flexions and her 'dirshthi' follow the dictum "Yatho Hasthasthato drishti" more consistently. But the casual

disdain in which she executed the complex 'thirumanams' i.e. the popular Varnam Ad Shivan Kanava Asai (Thod) could do ground as much to her own application as to the persistent efforts of Rekha.

But Siri's mukhija has to gain more conviction. It was hardly a match to her trit Nritha, the Virahatkhandita Nayika especially remaining elusive right through her enunciation. A little more exposure to the art perhaps should ensure her comprehending these subtleties. One hopes that her parents, who are obviously



Rekha Hegde and Vijayalakshmi as the sculptor in 'PURASKAR'



Delighting Veena and Dhanya

more concerned about her scholastic studies, will not allow her talent to wilt!

Puraskar : The dance-drama entitled Puraskar was certainly more impactful, both in its thematic denouement and for its sleek choreography, something a first-timer like Rekha could be proud of. Though it was evident that she herself was the only dancer

with stage experience, a whole set of novices moved so freely and so enthusiastically that there was no let up in the tempo. Especially impressive were the two girls who were cast in male roles, as the Chalukyan King and the Pallava sculptor, neither were appearing effeminate!

The story revolving round the historic Chalukyan temple

of Pattadakal, makes for a moving drama. It offers excellent scope for a dance-drama. The Chalukyan King who aspires to build a monumental temple in Pattadakal, persuades his Court Dancer Cheluvabbe to hire the services of the celebrated Pallavan sculptor. The task accomplished, the king condescending to the wishes of the latter, offers his own beloved Cheluvabbe as the reward (Puraskar), to the sculptor.

Rekha as the court dancer dances with gay abandon, dissolving from one alluring Sthanaka into another while modelling for the figurines on the temple walls. Even as a prima ballerina in the Chalukyan court and before the master sculptor, her Nritya stood out for its crisp 'thattu-mettu' and supple grace. Only her facial, especially when forced to desert the King, was short in depicting the conflicting emotions. That, however, didn't belittle the overall impact.

The simple, but suggestive decor went well with the usual Bharathanatyam costume, the sensitive lighting of Ravishankar heightening the visual vista. The musical score of the seasoned Janhavi Jaipurakash was another high spot of the production. More than all, no praise would be too much to the fledgling school which saw to it that there was no time lag between entracte!

RANGA PRAVESHAM

A compact programme greeted a packed ADA auditorium on June 1, for the Ranga Pravasha of Veena and Dhanya. Students of B. Bhannumathi. The sisters from

the inventory Ganesha Stuthi itself revealed a comfortable stage presence, symmetrical Angikas speaking for some solid grounding.

The two Nritya pieres, including the popular Kalyani Jattiswaram bespoke of the duo's steady 'thattu-mettu', Veena in particular enhancing the tant Angikas with a liberal dose of llexims, Dhanya on the other hand seemed to make up with some graceful 'greva n-thikas', though in either case a stricter adherence to the demands of "Yatho Hasthasthatho Drishti" would have enhanced the credibility. A few spacious Adavins could have also enriched the choreography. The two kritis Ulagam Pugazhnam (Dhanya) and Mahadeva Siva Shambhu (Veena) didn't seem to pose any challenge for them, the averly 'angikalbhinaya' fulfilling the needs of depiction.

The Varnam, 'Thanigai Vazhum Kumaresha (ragamalika) was almost in a similar vein, more a descriptive piece than demanding a delve into the essential Nayika element. But the 'theermanams' were wholesome, the duo displaying admirable concentration on laya. Though limited in scope, their facials came alive with greater conviction in the denouement for the familiar 'sancharis'. The two other pieres Narayana Hari and Adinda Shilpi were easy meat for the sisters, as the compositions did not pose any complex 'bhavabhinaya'.

In the wings, Bharu's trite Nattuvangam found resonant response in Geeta Navaneetham's rendition of songs.



Madhva Nataraj, B M Nagaraj in the Ballet, 'The Vision of Amir Khusro'

AMIR KHUSRO

Maya Rao, the well-known Kathak exponent could not have bargained for a better gift on her 70th birthday (May 2) than a presentation of one of her prize productions. It was a brilliant idea of her students to re-create as it were "The Vision of Amir Khusro", a choreographic extravaganza that had catapulted Maya to world acclaim. Maya, one of the first known disciples of Kathak Maestro Shambhu Maharaj had worked on the masterpiece commemorating her course in ballet technique in Moscow. That was way back in the early sixties.

Since then the ballet has seen several productions. But almost every time it is perforce a new team of students. In the present context it was especially so. With all her old students scattered the world over, it was both a challenge and an opportunity to the young aspirants.

One dare say that they met it in style and made a meat of it. With a script that is tested, a choreography that is

inspiring and music (by Anil Biswas) that is raptivating, all that remained for the enthusiastic team was to set the dance movement on the plot and organise the group sequencers aesthetically. This they did commendably, some individuals like B. M. Nagaraj in the lead role adding substance with articulated elan.

The result was an engrossing display of talent, shing proud as much to Maya for her disciplined tutelage as to the students for the dedicated application. That is what lent it a freshness even for one who was witnessing the ballet for the nth time!

Atreya

JUNE QUIZ ANSWERED

1. Dholak
2. Aghati
3. Bansuri
4. Been
5. Gottuvadyam
6. Harmonium
7. Morsing.

In Defence of Ranga Pravesha

Elsewhere in this issue, and earlier in the June issue, two eminent dance artistes have aired their strong views against the practice of Ranga Pravesha in Bharathanatyam. In different contexts they have explained how it is irrelevant altogether. The practice, they feel, is becoming increasingly expensive, not unoften an occasion to flower the hapless parents. It is equally true that because of the prohibitive expenses involved, many a talent in indigent circumstances is scared away from pursuing a study in the art.

It is because of this trend, a trend that is certainly not conducive for the promotion of the art, that Uma Rao of Mysore, an alumnus of Kalakshetra, Madras, and one of the senior-most dancers of the state, has dispensed with the formality of imposing Ranga Pravesha on her disciples. She finds it "increasingly expensive".

Hardly anyone can deny that it is so, and the system itself eminently avoidable. As Maya Rao, the renowned exponent of Kathak, and one of our most respected artistes, opines the practice is peculiar to Bharathanatyam. No other contemporary classical style of dance enjoins the system on its aspirants, though of late a few Kuchipudi gurus have adopted it.

In this connection, Maya recalls a conversation she had with the legendary Balasaraswathi. The latter was categorical that the

system had no relevance in the present context. It was actually handed down by the Devadasis for whom it was an indispensable ritual. All three of them, i.e., Maya, Bala and Uma in one voice deplore that the occasion is exploited by some gurus, accompanying musicians and others to make a fast buck, besides some handsome mementos for which nobody would grudge! Even if one concedes that a debut calls for celebration, one wonders why it should be different from any other performance for the purpose of fees payable to artistes.

All this is true. The charge of exploitation at the time of Ranga Pravesha is not unfounded. For this it will be unfair to blame only the gurus or the musicians. The role of the parents is not insignificant. Instead of making it an occasion to rejoice at the fulfilment of their desire to see their ward emerging as a full-fledged artiste, some among the more affluent use it to display their pelf and position. Inevitably, a spirit of competition overtakes what should be a solemn occasion. And that is when money starts showing its ugly face, keeping up with the Janases becoming the norm.

How can the system be held responsible for this? Despite its unsavoury background, there is no doubt that after the Indian renaissance, Ranga Pravesha has become a part and parcel of Bharathanatyam. It is not only the simple way to assess the capabilities of a debutante, but

one that will provide her with the much-needed stage experience, so essential if she wants to make a career of it. In fact, the system is so useful and purposeful that the other styles would do well to adopt it. Maya herself had presented her daughter Madhu in a Kathak Ranga Pravesha.

All that is needed is to make it less expensive, avoiding all the ostentation associated with it in recent times. It should be the responsibility of the guru or the school concerned to see that the expenses are kept within the means of a concerned parent. At any rate, the occasion should not lead to exploitation. Nor is there any doubt that our musicians would be so unreasonable as to behave like Shylocks!

S.N. Chandrasekhar

Contributions on music and dance are welcome. They should be neatly typed on one side of the paper double spaced. Adequate return postage should be enclosed for the return of unaccepted articles.

Annual Subscription : Rs. 100
Three Years : Rs. 250

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For details relating to Circulation and Advertisement, please write to:

The Circulation / Advt Manager, Phoenix

THE BANGALORE PRESS

88, Mysore Road

Bangalore 560 018

Tel: 6601638, 6601027

Veteran Mridanga Artiste Feted

K. Raghavendra Rao



Vidwan R. Chandrasekharan felicitating
Mridanga Vidwan M. R. Rajappa

Glowing tributes were showered on the veteran mridangam artiste M. R. Rajappa on his 79th birthday and his services in the field of Carnatic music for over six decades.

The function was organised by 'Yuva Shrutu', an organisation of young musicians of the city recently.

While replying to the felicitations, the mridanga artiste made me realise that he is a man of few words.

Rajappa was born in Mysore in 1920 in a family of musicians. His grandfather Talha Subhan was his first guru. He later learnt from his elder brother M.S. Ramiah and H. Ramiah, the tavil vidwan. His first concert was when he accompanied B. K. Padmanabha Rao, a noted vocalist of yesteryears on

mridanga and by a happy coincidence, in the same Bidaram Hall where he was felicitated.

He has been an AIR artiste for the past 53 years. From 1961 to 1972 he was Palae Vidwan. He has served as a member of the Mysore District Sangeetha Nruthya Academy and as an examiner in the Karnataka State Talavadya Pariksha Mandal.

He has been honoured by a number of organisations and received the "Karnataka Kala

Tilaka" award of the State Sangeetha Nruthya Academy in 1988-89.

The number of his disciples in the percussion art is legion. Notable amongst them are Vidwans P. G. Lakshmi narayana, V. S. Rajagopal and M. A. Krishna Murthy, each in turn having trained a number of aspirants. Rajappa's sons M. R. Sainath, M. R. Manjunath, M. R. Hummantharaja and M. R. Bhaktavatsala are also percussion artistes, having made a name for themselves in the art.

Rajappa continues to provide mridanga accompaniment even to this day. This writer still remembers a concert two years ago, when he accompanied Vidushi Mahalakshmi who sang in tandem with her gifted student A. Vasudha, with H. K. Narasimha Murthy on the violin. The blend of nada and laya, the dovetailing between the artistes, the anticipation and the response were so perfect, that after the concert was over, involuntarily he complemented the artistes. "All four of you sang very well" The mridanga did sing on that day.

In the traditional dictum of Isavasya Upanishad, here is wishing M. R. Rajappa completion of a century of active life in the concert stage as well as in training disciples.

Music, Dance Institutions are invited to send news & reports on their activities. Articles and features are also welcome.

Cassettes on Music & books may be sent for review.

In the Tradition of Nayana Pillai

Padma Narayanan

With the passing away of N. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar in Bangalore recently, the world of Carnatic music has not only been deprived of an ardent teacher, but brings to an end a glorious chapter on the legendary Naina Pillai. Iyengar was one of the best known students of the great stylist, especially in Pallavi singing. In fact, D. K. Pattammal, a veteran who wields mastery over that form, owes her emulation to Iyengar.

Krishnaswamy Iyengar, popular as N.S.K., was born on January 31, 1914. His genius in music surfaced when he was barely 4, identifying a variety of ragas in a jiffy. Recognising his innate talent, his father put him under Narasimhaiahariar, a teacher in Annamalai University. Later, the great Tiger Varadachariar took him under his care. Soon Iyengar was accompanying Tiger in his concerts. Under him, Iyengar mastered the intricacies of Niraval, enriching his repertoire in ragas.

In his late teens, Iyengar's father brought him under the guidance of the retable Nayana Pillai in Kancheepuram. That was the time when N.S.K. got an insight into the nuances related to Raga-Thana-Pallavi. His expertise on Raga Alapana was also honed to perfection under the great master.

In the competition for the first conference of the Music Academy, Madras, two first prizes were declared. One of

them was for G.N. Balasubramaniam. The other was N.S.K.

During that time D.K. Pattammal lived in Damal, a village 8k.m. from Kancheepuram. Her father, Krishna Iyer was keen to get Naina Pillai as her teacher. But the latter asked N.S.K. to discharge that responsibility. Once, Naina Pillai wanted to



N.S.K. Iyengar

see how Pattammal was progressing and after listening to her singing, he was extremely pleased. "I have no doubt that Krishnaswamy would be a very good teacher", he remarked. And that is how a career of teaching opened up for Iyengar.

Ramnad Krishnan was another vocalist who benefited by Iyengar's association. The two of them would practice the rendition of Raga, Niraval and other nuances together for long hours, sharing the depths

of Raga and Laya. Iyengar naturally felt rather lonely after the untimely demise of the gifted vocalist.

T. Brinda was yet another close associate of N.S.K., as he was a frequent visitor to the Dhanammal household. He used to admire the family's traditional style of singing 'vimalamba kala' kritis, Padams and Javalis. After the passing away of Brinda, he wondered whether he would be the last in that glorious tradition.

N.S.K. had the distinction of serving Kalakshetra as a music teacher for many years in the company of M.D. Ramanathan. He had also been asked to teach Rukmini Devi at the time. But, he will be remembered for long as the torch-bearer of a classical tradition hallowed by Naina Pillai.

In the early Seventies, N.S.K. moved over to Bangalore, living almost incognito. The late D.K. Jayaraman in a concert in Malleswaram around 1983, reminded the rare kriti Neeelayalakshi (Mayamalavagoula). After an applause in appreciation of this wonderful piece, Jayaraman disclosed that he had learnt it from his master N.S.K. who, he revealed, was sitting just in front of the dais. He remarked Bangaloreans were lucky to have a master like him amidst. And that is how this writer came to know him!

Maya Rao : Kathak's Hopeful Tomorrow

Kathak's Maya Didi

Though it was Sohanlal of Jaipur who had introduced Kathak to Bangalore in the South way back in the early forties, it took more than four decades for it to really make a dent in this stronghold of Bharathanatyam. In the interval, especially after Sohan had thrown his lot with the films, many of his students had either shifted their loyalty to Bharathanatyam or diversified their interests.

Kathak regained its lost ground only after Maya Rao, Sohan's best-known disciple, shifted her Natya Institute of Kathak and Choreography from Delhi to the city. By then she had not only gained stature as a refined Kathak dancer, chiselled her technique under a maestro like Shambhu Maharaj, but also made a name as an astute choreographer, an art form she had perfected in Moscow. Her ballets had lent a new dimension to Kathak, once for all setting at rest the misconception that the northern dance style had nothing more than rhythmic exercises.

Today, Maya is regarded as one of the country's most accomplished artistes, a venerable Didi who is the recipient of almost every honour and award worth the name. **Pramila Lochan** speaks to Maya who celebrated her 70th birthday on May 2 last.

"Life's winners aren't the ones who stroll down easy Street, till they find a pot of gold right there beneath their feet. They're the ones who walk on bravely in spite of all their pains; They're the ones who climb each mountain, though it's ever so steep and rough."

Yes, they are the ones—the real true winners, they are made of life's finest stuff!"

As I read this quote by Phyllis C. Michael, a name that came to mind instantly was Maya Rao. Truly a winner, her life's dedication to Kathak stretched ahead of me. As dancer, choreographer—Director of international repute, she had walked a long path and is going strong reaching out to a distant horizon of many hopeful tomorrows to Kathak in Karnataka.

Here are excerpts of a few reminiscent moments...

On Childhood days...

I learnt music even before learning how to read and write. I went to school late and straight to the second standard when I was 6 years old. I learnt the dhruba first and was attracted to dance when I met Pt. Sohanlal. He taught my sisters. Since I was

14 years by then, my grandmother felt I was much too old for dance. Finally, I had my father agree on the condition that I should not perform on stage.

Beyond the first steps...

I used to pretend to carry the dhruba from home, saying



Maya with her late Husband M S Natirajan



'Chupke' ki gat. Pose by Maya Rao

I was participating in the orchestra while actually I used to dance. There was a lot of pressure put to learn and so I guess one made special efforts to learn. When I got a job at Jaipur to teach English, I thought I had to take it up so I could learn Kathak. The gurus were not there and I didn't enjoy teaching as much as I enjoy reading English literature. So, I went to Sri Lanka, where my brother H. S. Manohar was and learnt Kandyan dancing. Meantime, I met Nataraj in Bangalore and got married to him. We opened a centre called the Natya Saraswati Dance Centre in 1947.

Meeting Shambhu Maharaj...

In 1954, I was selected for a Government of India fellowship and got the chance to learn from Shambhu Maharaj. The first day I faced him I was frightened. He asked me, "where have you learnt Kathak". When he knew I had trained in the Jaipur style, he said, "I am a sculptor who works on ivory and not iron."

But when he saw my dance, he conceded to teach although from the very beginning. I learnt from him for several years and from Smder Prasad of Jaipur Gharana at the Bharatiya Kala Kendra promoted by the DCM group.

Although Maharajji was very good, he did not follow a system in teaching. He taught whatever came to his mind. I later formulated a system with him and taught the foundation course at the Kala Kendra.

Difference between Jaipur and Lucknow gharana

These days there is not much difference and the existent differences have been built by gharanas. For example, 'namad' in the Lucknow style, in the 'vilambit laya' is very slow. If we do it in the Jaipur style, the 'laya' is the same, but with a faster 'tukila'. This may have happened after the dance form travelled from the temple to the court. The Rajputs liked vigour whereas in Lucknow, the Nawabs and the Moghuls might have liked the dance slower. So, a lot of prominence is given to the 'ang' in this gharana. Though it is there in the Jaipur gharana a lot of speed is there too. So, there are a lot of 'parans' and 'namads'.

As a dancer...

Before I went to Shambhu

Maharaj, I choreographed a lot of ballets, but after meeting him, I concentrated on Sols. From 1955 to 1977 I performed only sols. In fact, after a week's training, I danced a duet with him, that was a great honour. I have beautiful memories of having Chaturlal on tabla, Ghulam Sahir Khan on Sarangi and Naina Devi's voice accompanying us. I continued to perform till my daughter was born. I was 42 years then. After that, I concentrated on choreography and teaching. I feel the figure



Maya Rao

of a dancer is as much important as being in good form.

Pt. Shankar...

Shankar was a brilliant performer and gave a sound grounding to his students.

Choreography and Natya Institute...

I got a scholarship in 1961 to go to Moscow and study there. Once I returned, I had the opportunity to be a consultant choreographer for 'Shakuntala' and 'Ramayana'. Since 1964, I've been running the choreography institute in Delhi as a Diploma course. In 1987, Ramkrishna Hegde extended all help to shift the Institute in Bangalore.

I find great pleasure in teaching, in choreograph and see my students perform. As a choreographer you are responsible for everything that happens on stage. Some of the items I've derived satisfaction from are 'Amir Khusro', 'Hussala Vaidhaya', 'Surdas', and 'Palsi Ram'.

Bala Saraswati...

She was an admirer of Shambhu Maharaj. I wish more people have her attitude towards Kathak. On one occasion, I remember a memorable performance of Bala and Shambhu Maharaj on the same stage interpreting a thumri. The spirit and content were the same, but the interpretation was different. It was beautiful. There was a union in the interpretation. Not like what we see in today's jugalandis.

On the present day 'Stage fever'

The 'arangetram' is something I find really

unnecessary. It was an important ceremony for the Devdasis. Where's the need for our girls to spend so much money. I know quite a few cases, where the girls can't afford and the teacher victimises them. In fact, Bala herself was saying that in the olden days, the arangetram was done in front of pupils. People

stopped the dancer and asked a 'tirmanam' to be repeated. How many of us know what 'tirmanam' is there.

Do we really need the public relations...

It seems so. Like one lady came up to me at our institution in Delhi and asked me, 'are you famous?' So, I told her, "I don't know, but people say so." To which she said, "but I have never seen you on television".

But, I believe that if you are a good artiste, you will not be forgotten. It may take some time, I never had any agents nor the Government promoting my cause. Yet, I have people who genuinely care for me and my art.

As Academy Chairperson

It was comfortable. I brought in changes of course. I decided to have only one award



instead of having graded awards such as 'paruskar' and 'prashasthi'. We instituted an award for accompanists. I started the Sangeet Nrityotsava for youngsters at district levels, temple festivals, enlarged the size of our publication 'Nada Nritya' and brought out a book on Karnataka musicians. My aim was primarily to focus more on performers.

Words of advice...

There is a general impression that youngsters are not interested, but that is not true. Those who are dedicated are sincere to their art. Whatever the form, one should keep in mind one's form and figure, while interpreting a great act. Technique is important but understanding and interpreting the finer nuances of the art are equally essential.

Sunada Sangama

Padma Gurudutt

Behind every successful man there is a woman. This popular adage could be as relevant in the converse, if the "Musical Evening by Musical Couples", a programme organised by the Percussive Arts Centre in the City recently, is any indication.

The interesting programme was got up to celebrate the birth centenary of C. Narasinga Rao, a known musical buff. As many as nine noted music couples, including vocalists, instrumentalists and percussion artistes, one complementing the other figured in it.

The concerts in the usual pattern took off with a brilliant nagaswaram duet by Prabhavati Palanivel and Palanivel, A. V. Kashinath providing the support on Dhol. But flautist G. Ragharam, in the absence of Radhika (a veena artiste) had to go it alone. His Kharaharapriya piece was equally impressive. G. R. Jaya with her versatile husband Bangalore K. Venkataram accompanying on the Mridanga, rendered two Chakras of the 72 Melakartas of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer. It was exquisite.

The 'vivadi mela' Vagadheswari was the raga chosen by Nagarajan and S. A. Sashidhar for their 'sunada' combination of Veena and Venu. The popular kriti Paramatunida was heightened with lovely 'kalpana' swaras. Dikshitar's Navavarana kriti on the Nava Grahas by Meenakshi Ravi, to the mridangam accompaniment of N. G. Ravi, was as absorbing.

Pushpa Kashinath on the Veena resuscitated Shahana for a neat 'raga-thanam and pallavi'. A. V. Kashinath who provided the Mridangam support, revelled in his 'thani avarthanam'.

Dattatreya Sharma provided the Mridangam support. Another 'devaranama' was rendered by Harini Krishna, with V. Krishna accompanying her on the Mridanga. Her Javali was as lilting. The fare was rounded off by Sumitra Ramabhadran who sang a Kshetragna padam and Thillana to the



G. R. Jaya with husband B'lore Venkataram on the Mridangam. Dr. Jyotsna is on the Veena

Indira Sharma (daughter-in-law of the late Annur S. Ramakrishna) rendered a 'devaranama' preceded by a shloka and a touching patriotic ditty to commemorate the 50 years of our Independence.

accompaniment of Mridanga by Ramabhadran. Dr. Jyotsna provided the violin support to all the vocalists.

All in all, this 'Nada Sangama' of the couples was a memorable experience.

Quiz

A few clues to Kathak

1. The exciting intricacies of footwork are known as — (Tatkar, Patta, Chakkar, Upangas)
2. Percussion instruments that accompany a performance (Tabla, Dholak, Pakhawaj, Dhol)
3. Kathaks who were story-tellers attached to temples were : (Vaishnavas, Brahmins, Devdasis)
4. Kathak was uplifted to a respectable state by (V.N. Bhatkhande, Madam Menaka, Shambhu Maharaj)
5. He composed hundreds of thumris, dadras, sadras, horis, bhajans and enriched Kathak. (Bindadin Maharaj, Bhairav Prasad, Kalaka Prasad)
6. Jaipur gharana was launched by (Maluji, Lalaji, Bhanuji)

More Revolutions, Great Masters

S. N. Sivaswamy

In the days prior to the advent of radio, our music world consisted of concert halls and the gramophone at home with its big horn (actually it was the phonograph, Gramophone being the trade name of the Company manufacturing the machine, "His Master's Voice" or H.M.V. for short). The discs made of shellac and rotating on the gramophone at 78 revolutions per minute (R.P.M.) not only went by the brand name of H.M.V. but also Columbia, Twin and many others. The Gramophone Company, the largest of them, was based in Calcutta, but one of their recording and marketing offices, was at Madras (now Chennai) which gave me an opportunity to attend some of their recording sessions.

These recording sessions took place after elaborate preparations, especially rehearsals of the artistes and timing of their performances, besides acoustic arrangements in the studios. Turaiyur Rajagopala Sharma, himself a reputed musician, was in charge of rehearsals. One of the recordings I closely followed was that of R. Thangammal, my aunt, whose rendering of Mysore Vasudevacharya's classic "Rara Rajeevalochana" (Mahana) was meticulously supervised by Turaiyur who took immense pains to make the recording a success. "Rara Rajeevalochana" was immediately popular and brought Thangammal the sobriquet "Gramophone Thangamma".

Another of my aunts, K. Dharmambal had a chastening influence on my adolescent wayward artistic interests. It was by constant listening to the vast collection of gramophone records in her collection that I cultivated a taste for good music. She was herself a singer and much devoted to music and invariably took us children along with her to D.N. Krishniah Chetty's music mart in Avenue Road for the selection and purchase of newly released gramophone records.

After 65 years I cannot look on my memory to recall all those delectable recordings of classic music that my aunt had collected, but some of them are fresh in my mind as models of music. There was great variety in her collection, from the masterly Ariyakkudi Ramamuja Iyengar's super fast Expresses "Anupama Ganambathi" in Athana, and "Ninnajoorthi Dhanyamalathini" in Sourashtra to the soulful and slow Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer's "Neerajakshi Kamakshi" in Hindolam. Other Ariyakkudi Gems she introduced to us included "Paridanamichite" in Bilahari, with alapana, madhyama kala Kriti, niraval and swarams, all packed into two sides of a disc. I think Ariyakkudi gave a structure to singers to follow, and demonstrated a new art of musical compensation.

Besides Ariyakkudi, my aunt's treasure contained records of practically all stalwarts of Carnatic music and many of Hindustani music. There was

Seemanguli Srinivasa Iyer, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar at his sonorous best, Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer's epoch-making "Nagummanaganaleni", M.S. Pattammal, and Alattur Brothers' unforgettable "Chandrashekhara" in Sindhu Bhairavi. Last I forget, I want to make a special mention of "Nannubrova Lalita" in Lalitha Raga by Bilaram Krishnappa, a haunting rendering of a rarely sung kriti. Among records of Hindustani music, those that readily come to my mind are Abidul Kacim Khan's renderings of Kirana classics.

The third channel through which I enriched myself, much later on, was the records library of the Madras Station of All India Radio, where, as a young Programme Assistant, I was in charge of recorded music besides other departments. I used to spend hours among the musty records and their scheduling registers selecting discs for different programmes. Each side of a small disc ran for three to three and quarter minutes and four sides could be packaged in a 15-minute programme while three sides of the larger disc could be accommodated likewise. We had "sets" of records like some great Nagaswaram recitals which could comprise a programme by themselves, like the great Vidin virtuosos Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu's "Kalyani" set of two discs.

At one time the 78 R.P.M. discs were the only source of recorded music available for an

eager public who wanted repeat performances of their favourites. Some artistes were more known for their discs than platform performances. "Isaivani" Vasuntakankilam for example, was often referred to as "Isaitattuvani" ("Isaitattu" literally meaning "Music Plate")

As I looked after Western Music Department also I acquired a smattering of Western Music at Madras. I compiled for Broadcast half-hour sessions of symphonies, concertos, cantatas and operas. The sessions were easy to handle as the parts were recorded in convenient order, the automatic record player taking care of their serial playback.

It seems to me to be a tragedy that the 78 RPM recording system is defunct and even those having the discs cannot listen to them any more because either they would by now be hopelessly worn out or because the modern consoles do not have the play back facility for 78 RPM records. The recording companies have resurrected a few of them by repressing and reissuing them as Long Playing Discs or Cassettes. However, it is a pity most of those classics are lost to posterity.

I once tried to get All India Radio interested in procuring the old 78 RPM discs of K. Dharmambal from her daughter Bhavani Panth and even made out for them a list of records worth re-recording on tapes. Probably some of them were purchased by All India Radio, but I do not know what happened to them afterwards.

(To be concluded).

At the Receiving End!!

—Manu Iyengar

Alt is often spoken about how difficult it is to be a dancer. One has to brave the years of physical regimen, financial burdens, teacher tantrums, time constraints, etc.

The time has now come to look into the efforts an amateur has to make for the privilege of being a member of the elite audience. He has to make time (that's next to impossible these days), set aside precious money (petrol costs the earth) and then some, brave the weather (need we mention pollution?), and the traffic (nerve-racking at best), to watch one performance. At the end of it all, we have one traumatised, hassled, dizzy, half-dead member of the audience! What makes this guy tick, I wonder.

(A) He's a long suffering relative or friend (?) of the dancer. Attending the performance is now a must or a relationship is under threat. So the dreaded invitation makes one trudge the steps of Ravindra Kalakshetra, or brave the mosquitoes of Gurn Narak Bhavan to watch another performance. My husband belonged to this category, when I put him out of his misery, having over-caught him surreptitiously reading a novel.

Parents, on the other hand have no choice. My father makes the best of a hopeless situation, and catches a cat-nap in a dark corner, while a Natkruraji Varnam thunders on.

(B) We now move on to the star-struck variety; those that will brave hail and snow storms to watch a Hema Malini, or a Mernakshi Seshadri in action. These people often leave the auditorium sated and more starstruck than before, having drooled over their idol for a napt three hours.

(C) And then, we have the Snobs. They'll attend the "Dhananjayans" and "Sonals" recital, arriving at 6.15 for a 6.30 performance, to flash their European accents and Cartier watches in the foyer, to see and be seen.

(D) There are the art critics. Their plight makes one shudder! They regularly watch all performances, good, bad or indifferent, from the first row, flanked by erudite company.

(E) Then there's us! People like me—we rush in late, trade gossip with peers, munch popcorn, crack a few nasty jokes, and leave early, having had a whale of a time!

There are a host of other categories: The Hawks—who come only to poke holes in others' techniques. The Fishermen—who come to fish for performances, the Polite Return Callers—who return the courtesy to those who have attended their programmes, the Fillers who come into the hall for a respite from a long journey, and yes, if you search long and hard, you may just find one or two souls who have made the journey to enjoy an evening of classical art.

East West Synthesis thro' Rhythm

"ELOQUENT PERCUSSION"
A GUIDE TO SOUTH
INDIAN RHYTHM—

By Ludwig Pesch & T. R.
Sundaresan—Ekagrata
Publications, Amsterdam.

Rhythm has brought East and West together in this work. Ludwig Pesch was born 123 years after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe left to endeavour for a reorientation in East-West Musical Synthesis.

After studying music and musicology at the Government Music College and University Freiburg (Germany), he came to Chennai as a disciple of H. Ramachandra Sastri, musical heir to the venerable Sarahba Sastri. Having taken the

diploma from the Central College of Music and post graduation at Kalakshetra, Pesch had given many concerts at many centres in India and abroad.

As 'A' grade artists with All India Radio and Doordarshan and a lecturer in mridangam at Kalakshetra, T. R. Sundaresan is a reputed exponent of percussion on kanjira, ghatam and konnakolam.

Their joint work titled *Elephant Percussion* provides descriptions of major Carnatic talas besides numerous exercises. The book is very useful for self-study of musicians, dancers, students, etc.

The authors affirm that 'South Indian rhythm displays some amazingly modern qualities on account of its unique combination of spontaneity (manodharma) and calculated permutation of patterns (Prastara). Simple patterns are recombined and juxtaposed to form more complex ones and in this manner, the various traditional time cycles yield a wealth of new rhythms' (193).

A concise publication, the get-up is fine and the presentation suggestive. It is available with the Karnatic Music Book Centre, Chennai-600014.

'Garland' N. Rajagopalan

'Nadaloludai' Greet's Veteran

Veteran Carnatic musician R. Chandrashekhariah, who stepped into the 84th year of his eventful life, was felicitated with a flute concert by Dr. Prapanehan Sitaram, the eminent flautist, in Mysore recently. Mysore M. Nagaraj (violin) and Tumkur B. Ravishankar (mridangam) accompanied the artiste.

Sitaram started off with a Thyagaraja Kriti "Nadaloludai" in Kalyana Vasantha a serene, evocative raga with arohana like Chandrakauns and avrohana like Keeravani. One of Thyagaraja's Pancharathna "Saadhincham" (Arahi) followed. The piece de resistance of the evening was Poorvi-Kalyani. With a

leisurely alapana, the Thyagaraja kriti "Jnanamsagarada", an extensive nerval of the line "Paramatmudu devatmudu" and swaraprastara in which the artiste employed his virtuosic skills. A fast paced "Sarasa samadana" (Kapinrayani) which was the bridge that led to a rarely heard raga, Manoranjani, a derivative of Manavathi, fifth Melakarta dropping the gandhara in the ascent. Thyagaraja's 'Atukaradani Palka' is a ninda-stuti in which the devotee is impatient with the Lord's indifference. The artiste's alapana-kriti-nerval-kalpana swara suit in this piece was well explored. After a Purandaradasa kriti "Dayamada Ranga" (Kalyani)

followed the two-hour concert ended with "Nadupai balikernaralu" (Mailhamavathi).

Sitaram's style is a harmonious blend of the introspective and the extroverted in alapanas and slow passages and the extroverted rococo technique with ornamentations like layakari, trills and jumps in the faster passages, which speak for his mastery over the instrument. Similar mastery was evident in Nagaraj's bowing. His alapana of Poorvi Kalyani stood out etching the poignant mood of the raga on the bass string. Ravishankar's alert percussion heightened the overall effect.

K. Raghavendra Rao

Mysore Dancer Casts Net on U.S.



Aparna Sindhoor

After the successful staging of her adaptation of late Dr. Anupama Niranjan's short story "Onda Ghatane Mattu Anantara" (An incident and the aftermath) in Mysore, Boston and recently at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore, the Bharatanatyam dancer from Mysore, Aparna Sindhoor (disciple of Dr. K. Venkatalakshmanam) has launched another project sponsored by the New World Theatre of Boston, Massachusetts, USA. She has hand-picked a short story of the same name from the collection *Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Divakaruni, Professor of English in Pothilla College, California and is setting it to a solo dance-drama format. The book is currently very popular in the States.

Aparna belongs to the rare breed of artistes, who make lull to go in for unconventional and controversial social themes, but retaining at the same time the Carnatik classical music-Bharatanatyam

K. RAGHAVENDRA RAO

mould. The artiste has cast her net wide for lyrics from medieval and navodaya Kannada poetry, Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, etc.

The front ranking Carnatik vocalist Sukanya Prabhakar who will set to music and sing the lyrics and G. S. Ramannjam, the popular percussionist, will join her in time for the rehearsals and production of the dance drama and a concert tour thereafter.

Aparna herself will handle the choreography, performance and set designs. Roberta Hun, a Japanese-American Artistic Director of the New World Theatre, will direct the 120-minute dance drama.

The first staging will be in Amherst, Mass. on July 10, 11, 1998 and in the legendary Ted Shawn's Jacobs Theatre in Berkshires, Mass. on 15 and 16.

Let us wish Aparna Sindhoor (who has settled down in Boston after marriage) every success in her artistic endeavours. J

Bhavan's New Courses



A section of the gurus who will be holding classes in Bharatanatyam, Music, dance, fine arts of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bangalore

The Bangalore centre of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which has a reputation for its diploma in several job-oriented courses, has now widened its spectrum by including classes in fine arts in painting, dance and music. The bi-weekly classes in a wide variety of subjects, each in charge of a seasoned teacher, was inaugurated recently by A.R. Chandrabasa Gupta, Secretary, Department of Kannada & Culture in the presence of a select gathering which included some young

aspirants who have already registered their names.

The courses include Hindustani music (Parameshwara Hegde), Mridangam (T. A. S. Mani), Violin (N. Venkatesh), Bharatanatyam (C. Radhakrishna), Sitar (N. R. Rama Rao), Verna (T. Sharada), Flute (A.P. Sarvotham), Carnatic Vocal (M. T. Selvanarayana) and Drawing & Painting (R. M. Hindapad). Besides, there are also classes in Sanskrit, Yoga and Rig & Yajur Vedas under scholars of eminence.

Thyagaraya's Boswell

H. N. Rajanna

Among the disciples of Saint Thyagaraja, Wilajupet Venkataramana Bhagavathar is credited to have recorded all the great composer's kritis. It was done on palm leaves. The Swarajathi "Ramanamoralin chara" in Harikambhoji, Rupaka tala bears the signature "Ramaputra Guruvinda". It is a composition of Venkataramana Bhagavathar.

The anecdote describing how the Bhagavathar became the disciple of Thyagayya makes interesting reading. Eager to serve the master, every morning at the "Brahmi Muhurtham", the Bhagavathar would collect some 'Tulsi' leaves and place them in such a way that the saint-singer on returning from

his bath in the river, would notice them. Naturally, he used them in his daily worship too.

This went on for many days, neither Thyagayya himself nor his other disciples bothering about the source. The saint himself was almost convinced that it was a devoted job of one of his disciples.

Suddenly one day, the saint could not find the 'Tulsi' leaves in the usual place. On enquiry, the disciples pleaded ignorance of it all. The saint then asked them to keep a vigil and find out who the person concerned was.

Accordingly, the disciples were able to catch Venkataramana Bhagavathar in the job. Thyagayya who was immensely pleased with his

devotion, accepted him as one of his disciples.

Ayyampet in Tanjavur district is the birth place of the Bhagavathar. Every year that hamlet celebrates his birthday in February with devoted fervour. The Madurai Samrashtira Sabha has preserved Thyagayya's works "Srimad Bhagavatham" and "Nanka Charithram" (Krishna leela) in manuscript form. Also in its possession is the 'Thamburam' of the saint and his "paduka" (footwear). Bhagavathar's family has handed over all these relics to the Sabha. The palm leaf collections in 83 bundles are displayed for public view. But the condition of all these sacred objects is nothing to boast of. It is time that the Tamil Nadu Government takes possession of them and arrange for their better maintenance and public view.

Darbar and Nayaki

Kusuma Rao

For its "Raga Darshini" series, the Thyagaraja Gana Sabha recently featured the twin ragas Darbar and Nayaki. Veteran vocalist R. K. Srikantan, assisted by his son R. S. Ramakanth and disciple T. S. Satyavati gave a lecture demonstration on the distinguishing features of the two "Bashanga" melodies.

In his scholarly exposition, Srikantan pointed out that though the scale for both the ragas was similar, there were subtle differences in the 'sanchara' that distinguished each. Ri, Dha, Pa are the 'raga-chaya' swaras in Nayaki, while Darbar has Ga and Ni as 'jeeva' swaras with Ri and Dha as the

vadi-samvadi. If 'Jaaru gamaka' on Ni and Ga bring out the melodic beauty of Nayaki, Valli gamaka Ga-Ga and Yavala prayaga GGRS, NNDP, GGRS lend Darbar its characteristic slant.

About the moods of the two ragas, the much-awarded vocalist explained that while Nayaki evoked Bhakti, Karuna and Dainya rasas, Darbar is ideal for Srngara and Veera rasas.

Illustrating the features made out in the exposition, Satyavati rendered a Swarajati in each raga and a varnam (Rudrapatnam Venkatarama Iyer) in Nayaki

set to Khanda Tripata. Dikshitar's Palayamman Brhmdeswara, Jayachamruja Wadiyar's Brihannayaki and the celebrated Ranganayaki (Dikshitar) highlighted the salient features of Nayaki.

Before trying to bring out the difference in Darbar, Ramakanth rendered Neo Bhajana, Thyagayya's classic in Nayaki, Swati Tirotal's Smara Manasa Padmanabha, Thyagayya's Narada Gana Swinai and Munduvenga and Vasudevargar's Raghavemragurumanasamsi received an impartial airing by Ramakanth to identify the contrasting features in Darbar.

Vidwan Srikantan sang a few compositions of Purnanara Dasu to add lustre to the rewarding evening.

With Compliments to



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